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## **Senator Laura Toy's Bill to Oversee DWSD Sent to Governor**

**LANSING** – Senate Bill 372, sponsored by state Sen. Laura M. Toy, is on its way to the governor's desk marking her second attempt to bring accountability to the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department for the constituents she serves.

"Call, write, fax, or e-mail the governor and tell her that you want your voice to be heard," Toy, R-6th District, urged of residents in southeast Michigan. "If the governor is serious about helping all the residents of Michigan she will sign this bill to bring accountability to a system that supplies nearly half the state's population with life sustaining water."

In March 2003, a newly elected governor vetoed similar legislation to create an oversight board to review the department's financial dealings. The legal concerns raised by the governor in her veto message of that legislation are addressed and corrected in Senate Bill 372 which passed the Michigan House of Representatives today.

The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department has been plagued for more than three decades by problems involving substantial wholesale rate increases, delinquent accounts, water main breaks, security lapses, contracting irregularities and other questionable practices.

Since 1996, wholesale water rates charged by DWSD to its suburban customers have increased by more than 93 percent. This is more than three-and-a-half times the rate of inflation in the same period.

"During the past three years instead of seeing the reform that was promised, we have seen more of the same," Toy said. "Although slight progress has been made, the air of uncertainty and suspicion remains, exacerbated by the department's unwillingness to share requested information and continued media reports of questionable contracting practices.

"When the Detroit City Council rejected proposed water rate increases it raised red flags about the true level of transparency within the department and from the current administration in the city of Detroit. We need some checks and balances here."

Despite the accusations of Toy's critics, she insists her legislation is not a takeover of the department.

“Under my bill, the city of Detroit would continue to own and be in charge of the day-to-day operations of the department,” Toy said. “What we want is a clear and accurate accounting of how rates are set and contracts are awarded, which is what the oversight board created in my legislation would provide.”

The bill returns to the Senate on Tuesday for a vote on immediate effect. After the bill is presented to the governor she has 14 days to sign or veto it.

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